Bartolomeo Colleoni

A short historical notice of his life and of his monument

Tiffany & Co., New-York
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To Wm W. Ca Francis

with the compliments of

The author

Bartolomeo Colleoni was born in Bergamo in the year 1400. — Son of a Guelfo, which the Visconti's had turned out of Bergamo, Bartolomeo had seen his father killed by traitors, who were mem-

-bers of his own family.
Both he and his mother
were held prisoners by the
murderers, but he succe-
-eded in escaping from the
Castle della Rocca, only
to fall into the hands of
the tyrant of Cremona
who put him back in
prison on account of the
debts of his family.

As soon as he was
out of prison, Bartolomeo

The Colleoni monument in Venice

entered the service of the Venitian Republic, under the orders of Carmagnola.

He fought against the Duke of Milan, Ph. Visconti, vanquished the grand General Sforza and the terrible Piccinius. He then passed in the enemy's Camp, under the Duke of Milan. —

In 1448 he left him to serve again under the

flag of the Republic of Venice, which was not an unusual conduct for Condottieres and Merce-naires of that time.

At 52 years of age, Colleoni made a contract for life with the Republic of Venice, and was app-ointed Chief General of the troops of the Repu-blic.-

His pride, at times

got the better of his judg-
-ement; he translated
his name as "Caput
leonis" (lion's head)

He bestowed on him-
-self the honors of an
equestrian Statue.

Having left by his
will large amounts to
the Senate of Venice[1], he
accompanied his gift by
a petition requesting that
his Equestrian Statue be

(1) Pingue hereditâ

erected on the Place St Marc
in Venice.— The Senate,
not being able to erect
the Statue on this Place
in consequence of an an-
-cient law forbidding obst-
-ructions of any kind, and
on the other hand, de-
-sirous of not loosing the
benefit of the gift, issued
a decree, directing that it
should be erected on the
Place of the "Confrérie de St Marc"

"Scuola di San Marco"
so that the words "Piazza"
and "San Marco" mentio-
-ned on the will, should
also appear on the decree..

Andrea del Verro-
-chio, master of the cele-
-brated Leonardo di
Vinci, was appointed for
the modelling and execu-
-tion of the monument.

Vasari states that
Verrocchio, whilst finishing

finishing the modelling of the Horse, learned that another artist, Vellano of Padova, was on the point of securing, through underhand proceedings and the protection of certain patricians, the order for the figure of the rider. Verrocchio in a rage, broke the legs and the head of the horse and fled to Florence. The Senate offended, insis-

-med him that if he
dared to return to Venice
again, they would cut his
head off. The Sculptor
answered that he would
take great care not to
return as the "Serenissimes
" Lords would be at a
" much greater loss to
" replace his head on
" his shoulders, if they
" evermished to do so,
" than he, to replace that

« of the horse » This answer, showing that he was ready to finish the work, was accepted and he was authorized to return to Venice. — He resumed his work with such fervour that he caught cold and died.

Verrochio, dying, left the work unfinished. In his will, dated 1488, he begs the Republic of Venice to allow the « work of the

Horse" to be finished by his pupil Lorenzo di Credi, but the Senate preferred the Venitian Leopardi, who was entrus-ted with the casting of the statue, and the desi-gning and execution of the pedestal (1) to the Florentine artist Lorenzo.

This is the reason why the figure of the rider Colleoni, was attributed

(1) perficere equum et statuam.

by certain historians to Leopardi; but it is difficult to admit that Verrocchio did conceive an equestrian figure otherwise than in it's total; that he would have modelled a horse and not the rider. The passion of Verrocchio when he learnt that another sculptor was to get the order for the rider, proves that he had already

conceived the whole model and if in his will he mentions the "Work of the Horse" "Opus Equi"(1) it is absolutely doubtless that he means the whole monument.—

The name of Verrocchio does not appear, it is true in the inscription on the girth of the Horse reading:

ALEXANDER. LEOPARDVS.
V.F. OPVS.

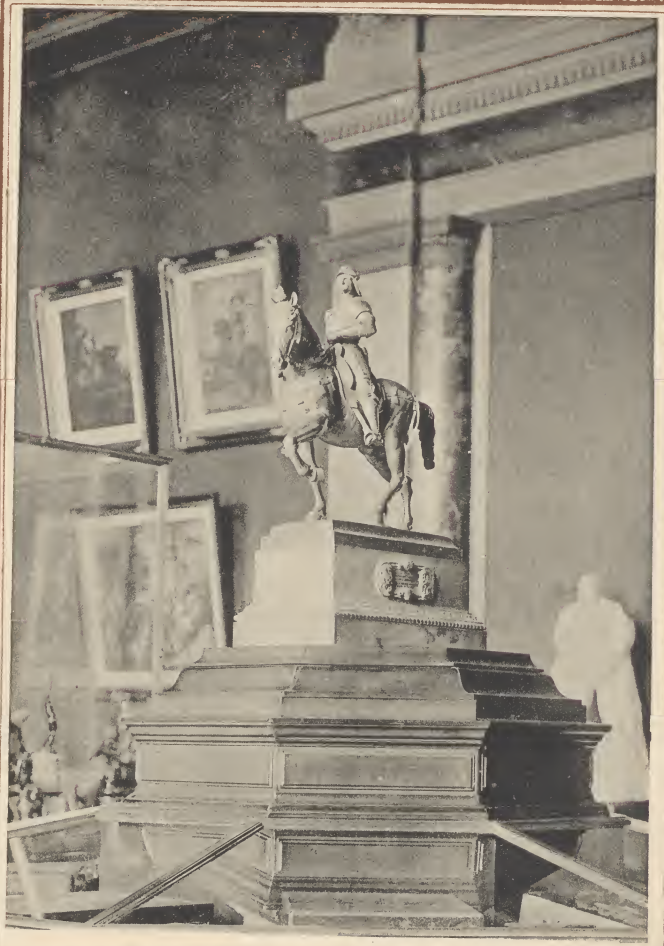
(1) opus equi per me principiato

but V.F. can be translated by "venetus Fundit" as well as "venetus Fecit" He has signed as founder and not as author. Besides this, he takes the precaution, in order not to rob the glory of the real author of this superb monument, by hiding his own name under the horse's stomach. But the best, and we can say

the absolute proof of this is his epitaph, which he composed himself, and which is in the convent "della Madonna del Orto" where one can read that he has made the pedestal of the Colleoni Statue "la base del cavallo di B. Colleoni". It is doubtless that if he had made the rider, he would have also mentioned it.

This monument of a rare beauty, is recogni-zed to be the best of all the equestrian Statues of the epoch, even the famous Gattamelata by Donatello.

In 1855, Thiers. President of the French Republic in 1871, a great connoisseur and collectionneur., asked the Austrian Government



The Colleoni statue in the Louvre

who possessed Venice at that time, the autho-risation to have a reduction made of this monument. This was executed by Ramus and was the first reduction ever made, at least in France. The first and unique cast, is now in the Louvre. When it was cast M^r Thiers had the model and mould

destroyed, but after his death this piece having been presented to the Louvre, with all his collections, according to his will, became National property, and was remoulded. - The statue herewith is a replica of the one in the Louvre.

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